

What is claimed is:

1. A method for managing electronic dossiers each having one of a plurality of document formats, wherein the electronic dossiers are accessible by a plurality of web site users via a computer network, the method comprising the steps of:

selecting an electronic dossier for conversion;

obtaining, from a predetermined set of templates, one template associated with the format of the electronic dossier;

obtaining, from a predetermined set of styles, at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the format of the electronic dossier;

converting the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format;

storing the converted electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset in a unified database; and

providing access to the unified database to a plurality of users through a computer network browser interface in order to at least one of process, view, and store the converted electronic dossiers.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic dossier format is chosen from the group consisting of: HTML pages, database content plus templates, static web pages, documents containing alphanumeric data, documents containing image data, links to other web sites, and XML documents.

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3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the computer network comprises a number of groups maintaining different sets of document platforms.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein each template of the predetermined set of templates is comprised of at least three distinct areas accessible through a graphical user interface, the distinct areas are chosen from the group consisting of:

- a top area having at least one pointer chosen from the group consisting of: a pointer for a global navigation path, a pointer for a global topic, and a pointer for a global function;

- a local navigation area having at least one pointer chosen from the group consisting of: a pointer for a local navigation path having a predetermined maximum hierarchical navigation depth, a pointer for a local page of the web site, and a pointer for an page of an external web page;

- at least one micro-identity area; and

- a content area having a predetermined layout according to the predetermined set of styles.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein converting the electronic dossier to a unified format includes modifying at least one property of the electronic dossier chosen

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from the group consisting of: text font, font size, font color, page color, background color, titles, subtitles, element spacing, and multimedia content.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein each of the electronic dossiers in the unified database is organized as a part of a collection of hierarchically organized pages forming a site describing at least one of a product, a service, a process, and an organizational unit.

7. The method according to claim 1, wherein converting the electronic dossier includes the conversion of the electronic dossier to XML format, and wherein content data within the electronic dossier is stored in the form of information blocks independent from one of the design and the layout of the content data.

8. The method according to claim 1, further comprising checking and verifying content data of the electronic dossier prior to its conversion for at least one of accuracy, timeliness, and relevance to the site.

9. The method according to claim 1, further comprising substituting a web page not existing in a certain requested language by an available language version of the web page according to a predefined priority scheme.

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10. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

receiving feedback information about one of a web page and a web site from a user;

routing the feedback information to a feedback database accessible by an administrator of the one of web page and a web site; and

entering the feedback information into the feedback database.

11. The method according to claim 1, further comprising providing web sites with access to an integrated image library, wherein the integrated image library has a hierarchical organization for distinguishing between images accessible by a plurality of websites and images accessible by a single website.

12. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

determining whether links within the converted electronic dossier are valid based on their type;

determining whether the content data within the converted electronic dossier has expired;

determining whether the content data within the converted electronic dossier result in one of orphaned content data and orphaned sites; and

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determining whether users attempt to access one of web pages and web sites without proper authorization.

13. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

scanning migrated electronic dossiers for extracting document related meta information; and

attaching the extracted document related meta information to a document for search and retrieval by users of the unified database.

14. A network component adapted to be connected to a plurality of members of a group of network components in a computer network for a unified network-based document management, comprising a hosting unit for hosting access by the group of network components of at least:

a first program code portion for generating one or more graphical user interfaces, one of the graphical user interfaces having at least a first control element for initiating a transformation of an electronic dossier originating from one of a number of document platforms, the electronic dossier being provided in a first format and being made available to a number of users of a web site; and

a second program code portion configured to:

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obtain from a predetermined set of templates one template to be correlated to data of the electronic dossier;

obtain from a predetermined set of styles at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the data of the electronic dossier,

migrate the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format, and

electronically export the electronic dossier together with the suited template and the style subset to a unified database, wherein the unified database is adapted to store the electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset and is accessible by a user by means of one of the network components through a browser interface by means of a browser installed on at least the one network component in order to at least one of process, view and store the electronic dossier.

15. The network component according to claim 14, wherein the document platform from which the electronic dossier originates is chosen from the group consisting of: HTML pages, database content plus templates, static web pages, documents comprising alphanumeric data, documents comprising image data, links to other web sites, and XML documents.

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16. The network component according to claim 14, wherein the computer network comprises a number of groups maintaining different sets of document platforms.

17. The network component according to claim 14, wherein each template of the predetermined set of templates is comprised of at least three distinct areas accessible through the one graphical user interface chosen from the group consisting of:

- a top area comprising at least one pointer chosen from the group consisting of: a pointer for a global navigation path, a pointer for a global topic, and a pointer for a global function;

- a local navigation area comprising at least one pointer chosen from the group consisting of: a pointer for a local navigation path having a predetermined maximum hierarchical navigation depth, a pointer for a local page of the web site, and a pointer for a page of an external web page;

- at least one micro-identity area; and

- a content area having a predetermined layout according to the predetermined set of styles.

18. The network component according to claim 14, wherein design rules utilized to create and format the migrated electronic dossier include text font, font size, font color,

page color, background color, titles, subtitles, text, spacing between elements, and multimedia content.

19. The network component according to claim 14, wherein each of the electronic dossiers in the unified database is organized as a part of a collection of hierarchically organized pages forming a site describing one of a product, a service, a process and an organizational unit.

20. The network component according to claim 14, wherein each of the migrated electronic dossiers in the unified database uses XML as the unified format, and wherein content data is stored in the form of information blocks which are independent from one of the design and the layout of the content data.

21. The network component according to claim 14, further comprising a third program code portion for checking and verifying content of the electronic dossier prior to its migration to the document platform having the unified format with regard to at least one of accuracy, timeliness, and relevance to the web site.

22. The network component according to claim 14, further comprising at least one function chosen from the group consisting of:

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a platform manager function, the platform manager function including technical programming and development of the unified platform,

a web manager function, the web manager function including publishing responsibilities for an entire business unit, including creation of web sites, definition of users, authorization of site managing functions and of publishing functions, accessing web sites with predefined restrictions in their business area, and providing information, data and support for publishing activities,

a site manager function, the site manager function including allowing access to publishing functions of predefined sites, definition of local navigation, and ascertaining the compliance with the predetermined set of templates and the predetermined set of styles,

a publisher function, the publisher function including the creation and formatting of pages of a web site, creation and insertion of local navigation pointers into pages of a web site, insertion of graphics on web pages, adding text on web pages, effecting changes and updates, defining and verifying links to pages, and publishing and deactivating pages,

a site owner function, the site owner function including responsibilities for the content of the web site, effecting administrative duties including the definition of guidelines for the provision of a web page in certain languages, the publication format, and the period of validity of certain pages of a web site, and

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an author function, the author function including at least one of creation and provision of text and graphics, and provision of translations.

23. The network component according claim 14, further comprising a program code portion configured to effect a language management function that substitutes a web page not existing in a certain requested language by an available language version of this web page according to a predefined priority scheme.

24. The network component according to claim 14, further comprising a program code portion configured to:

- receive feedback information about one of a web page and a web site from a user;
- route the feedback information to a feedback database accessible by an entity responsible for the one of the web page and the web site; and
- enter the feedback information into the feedback database.

25. The network component according to claim 14, further comprising a program code portion providing access of web sites to an integrated image library, with the integrated image library having a hierarchical organization allowing for the distinction of globally valid images from those that are to be used only within one site.

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26. The network component according to claim 14, comprising a program code portion configured to:

- check links depending on the link type;
- determine if content data within one of the web pages and web sites has expired;
- detect one of orphaned content data and orphaned sites; and
- detect accounts of users trying to access one of web pages and web sites without authorization.

27. The network component according to claim 14, further comprising a program code portion configured to:

- scan migrated electronic dossiers for extracting document related meta information; and
- attach the extracted document related meta information to a document for search and retrieval by users of the unified database.

28. A computer database product for a unified network-based document management, comprising at least one electronic dossier originating from a document platform, each of the dossiers being provided in a unified format together with at least a subset of style characteristics of a predetermined set of styles to be correlated to data of the electronic dossier, and one template of a predetermined set of templates to be correlated to data

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of the electronic dossier, and wherein the electronic dossiers are accessible by a user by means of a network component through a browser interface by means of a browser installed on the network component in order to at least one of process, view, and store the electronic dossiers.

29. A system for managing electronic dossiers each having one of a plurality of document formats, wherein the electronic dossiers are accessible by a plurality of users via a computer network, the system comprising:

- a selection unit for selecting an electronic dossier for conversion;

- a template unit for obtaining from a predetermined set of templates one template associated with the format of the electronic dossier;

- a style unit for obtaining from a predetermined set of styles at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the format of the electronic dossier;

- a conversion unit for converting the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format; and

- an importing unit for importing the converted electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset into a unified database, wherein the unified database is adapted to store the converted electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset and is accessible through a computer

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network browser interface in order to at least one of process, view and store the converted electronic dossiers.

30. A system for managing electronic dossiers each having one of a plurality of document formats, wherein the electronic dossiers are accessible by a plurality of users via a computer network, the system comprising:

selection means for selecting an electronic dossier for conversion;

first means for obtaining from a predetermined set of templates one template associated with the format of the electronic dossier;

second means for obtaining from a predetermined set of styles at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the format of the electronic dossier;

conversion means for converting the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format; and

database means for storing the converted electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset accessible through a computer network browser interface in order to at least one of process, view and store the converted electronic dossiers.

31. A method for document management comprising the step of providing one or more graphical user interfaces (GUIs), one of the graphical user interfaces (GUIs) including:

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a first control element for initiating a conversion of an electronic dossier originating from one of a number of document platforms, wherein the electronic dossier is provided in a first format and is made available to a number of users of a web site; and

a second control element for:

obtaining from a predetermined set of templates one template to be correlated to data of the electronic dossier;

obtaining from a predetermined set of styles at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the data of the electronic dossier;

migrating the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format; and

electronically exporting the electronic dossier together with the suited template and the style subset to a unified database, wherein the unified database is adapted to store the electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset and is accessible through a computer network browser interface in order to at least one of process, view and store the electronic dossiers.

32. A computer system for managing electronic dossiers each having one of a plurality of document formats, wherein the electronic dossiers are accessible by a plurality of web site users via a computer network, the system comprising a processor and a

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memory coupled to the processor, the memory encoding at least one program, the at least one program causing the processor to:

- select an electronic dossier for conversion;

- obtain from a predetermined set of templates one template associated with the format of the electronic dossier;

- obtain from a predetermined set of styles at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the format of the electronic dossier;

- convert the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format; and

- store the converted electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset in a unified database; and

- provide access to the unified database to a plurality of users through a computer network browser interface in order to least one of process, view, and store the converted electronic dossiers.

33. A computer system for managing electronic dossiers each having one of a plurality of document formats, wherein the electronic dossiers are accessible by a plurality of web site users via a computer network, the system comprising a processor and a memory coupled to the processor, the memory encoding at least one program, the at least one program causing the processor to:

- select an electronic dossier for conversion;

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obtain from a predetermined set of templates one template associated with the format of the electronic dossier;

obtain from a predetermined set of styles at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the format of the electronic dossier;

convert the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format; and

store the converted electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset in a unified database; and

provide access to the unified database to a plurality of users through a computer network browser interface in order to at least one of process, view, and store the converted electronic dossiers.

34. A computer program product comprising program code portions for execution on at least one component of a computer network, the program code portions controlling the at least one component of the computer network to manage electronic dossiers each having one of a plurality of document formats, wherein the electronic dossiers are accessible by a plurality of web site users via a computer network, the computer program product including:

first code portions for selecting an electronic dossier for conversion;

second code portions for obtaining from a predetermined set of templates one template associated with the format of the electronic dossier;

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third code portions for obtaining from a predetermined set of styles at least a subset of style characteristics to be correlated to the format of the electronic dossier;

fourth code portions for converting the electronic dossier to a document platform having a unified format; and

fifth code portions for storing the converted electronic dossier together with the obtained template and the obtained style subset in a unified database; and

sixth code portions for providing access to the unified database to a plurality of users through a computer network browser interface in order to at least one of process, view, and store the converted electronic dossiers.

35. A method for providing web site users with access to an electronic dossier containing data, the method comprising:

receiving a request to access the electronic dossier, the electronic dossier originating from a first document platform;

determining a template suitable for the data of the electronic dossier;

determining style characteristics suitable for the data of the electronic dossier;

converting the electronic dossier into a second document platform;

associating the converted electronic dossier with the template and the style characteristics; and

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providing the web site users with access to the converted electronic dossier in accordance with the template and the style characteristics, wherein the access is provided through a computer network browser interface.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the second document platform is XML.

37. The method of claim 35, wherein associating comprises storing the electronic dossier with the template and the style characteristics in a unified database.

38. The method of claim 35, wherein associating comprises storing, in a unified database, the electronic dossier along with a pointer to a storage location of the template and a storage location of the style characteristics.

39. The method of claim 35, further comprising defining an XML Document Type Definition for the data.

40. The method of claim 35, further comprising limiting the data of the electronic dossier to a paragraph, wherein multiple electronic dossiers form a web page.